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ABSTRACT

Despite a myriad of school reform efforts, inner-city schools, attended for the most part by poor and working-class Black and Latino children, are failing to prepare students for our highly complex and changing world. This book suggests that reform efforts have failed because they focused upon school-based solutions and paid scant attention to the role of the most important institution in the developmental and educational process--the family. Eight poor Latino families in Evanston, Illinois, were studied intensively in their homes over an 8-week period, using ethnographic techniques. All families had both parents present, and 14 of the 16 parents came from Mexico. The families had a total of 21 children aged 1-13. Most mothers spoke only Spanish and carried out almost all child-rearing tasks. Observers focused on the home environment and family processes, values, and attitudes, and looked at such issues as self-esteem, locus of control, educational attitudes, and educational processes within the home. Discussion of the findings includes comparisons with a previous, similar study of 12 poor Black families in the same city. In particular, findings focused on the extent to which parent stressed discipline, cooperation, internal control, high educational aspirations, responsibility, and a future orientation, and had home environments that were orderly, quiet, and structured. Children's involvement in household chores, extracurricular activities, and television watching were also addressed. Policy implications are discussed. An appendix presents the parent questionnaire in English and Spanish. (Contains 115 references and additional resources and an index) (SV)

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